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# International Planned Parenthood Federation (I.P.P.F.)

## ITS HISTORY AND INFLUENCE

### Introduction

**T**HE INTERNATIONAL PLANNED Parenthood Federation, founded at Bombay in 1952, was preceded by a long series of international conferences, organizations and committees dating back to the neo-malthusian movement of the nineteenth century. The first of this series was the International Neo-Malthusian Conference, held in Paris in 1900 under the presidency of Dr. C. R. Drysdale; this led to the formation of the *Fédération Universelle pour la Régénération Humaine*.

Between 1900 and 1911 three further conferences were held, at Liège (1905), the Hague (1910) and Dresden (1911). By 1912 the *Fédération Universelle* comprised constituent bodies in fifteen countries (eleven in Europe; one each in North, Central and South America and one in Africa). Before the next, the Fifth, International Malthusian Conference could be held the 1914-18 War had begun and there was a gap of ten years during which new pioneers, Mrs. Margaret Sanger in the United States and Dr. Marie Stopes in England, came on the scene and a new "birth control" movement began to take shape.

The term "birth control," coined by Mrs. Sanger, soon became popular in England as expressing better the aims of the movement than the older more clumsy term "neo-malthusianism." In time "birth control" itself became outmoded and we now have "planned parenthood" or "family planning."

### PART I: 1912-1945

#### Mrs. Margaret Sanger

As a public health nurse in New York Margaret

Sanger began in 1912 her lifelong fight to free women from unwanted pregnancies. In the beginning Mrs. Sanger saw birth control solely in relation to the health and happiness of the family. It was later, in 1917, while writing her book *Woman and the New Race* (published in 1920) that she began to realize the contribution that birth control could make to a nation's survival. Her visit to Germany in 1920 in search of more scientific methods of birth control crystallized this belief. She was appalled by conditions there: the degrading poverty, an aftermath of war; the subjugation of the women and the attempts being made to build up the birth rate seemed to her to hold a fresh threat to peace. Mrs. Sanger returned to New York with the contraceptive jelly but also with a new message—"birth control must save the world from another and more devastating holocaust." The direct connection between overpopulation and war became the recurrent theme of her speeches. Shortly after her return she sounded a second warning that Japan's population would one day explode beyond its borders unless birth control was adopted immediately. But it took twenty-eight years, during which time Japan's population increased from 56 to 80 million, and the chaos of World War II to persuade the Japanese Government to adopt a policy of population control. In 1954, on her fourth visit to Japan, Mrs. Sanger was invited to address a committee of the Japanese Parliament: she spoke at a session of the Upper House Welfare Committee on the subject of "World Population and Birth Control."

On Mrs. Sanger's second visit to London, in 1915, she met Mrs. Edith How-Martyn, then

active in the suffragette movement, who made the arrangements for and took the chair at Mrs. Sanger's first public meeting here. Present in the audience at that meeting was Dr. Marie Stopes whose well-known book *Married Love* was to be published in 1918, followed by *Wise Parenthood*. In the years ahead the paths of these three women converged many times: for Margaret Sanger and Edith How-Martyn it was the beginning of a long and close association; together they organized international conferences, established an international information centre in London and travelled extensively for birth control. Theirs was a revolution of thought which spread throughout the world.

In order to test the so-called Comstock law in the United States Mrs. Sanger opened the first birth control clinic in 1916, following which she was imprisoned for thirty days for creating a public nuisance. In 1918 she won her first great legal victory, establishing that a physician who in good faith gives birth control help or advice to a married person to cure or prevent disease is not contravening the law.

#### **Dr. Marie Stopes and her Clinic'**

In 1921, Dr. Marie Stopes opened at Holloway in London the first birth control clinic in England and founded the Society for Constructive Birth Control and Racial Progress. In the same year, a second clinic, ostensibly a maternity and child welfare centre, was opened at Walworth by the Malthusian League. The Walworth Centre was later taken over by the Society for the Provision of Birth Control Clinics which in 1930 joined with several other groups to form the National Birth Control Association (now the Family Planning Association) with which at first Dr. Stopes co-operated.

Of the early pioneers only the Malthusian League in England and the Society for Constructive Birth Control kept their separate entities to the end. The Society ceased in October 1958 with the death of Dr. Stopes. The Whitfield Street clinic which she left to the Eugenics Society continues as the Marie Stopes Memorial Clinic. The last of the "malthusian" Drysdals, Dr. C. V. Drysdale, died in February 1961 and with him ended an historic

organization which was formed eighty-four years ago (1877) "to agitate for the abolition of all penalties on the public discussion of the population question" and "to spread among the people by all practicable means a knowledge of the law of population, of its consequences and of its bearing upon human conduct and morals."

#### **Birth Control in Asia**

The year 1922 marked the beginning of the modern birth control movement in Asia: Margaret Sanger on her first world tour spoke to packed audiences in Japan and China and news of her work spread to India. As a result of meeting Mrs. Sanger, a young Japanese woman, Baroness Shidzue Ishimoto (now Senator Mrs. Kato) devoted herself to the emancipation of Japanese women: in 1935 she started a birth control clinic in Tokyo which was closed down two years later by the Japanese militarists when she was arrested along with many other liberal thinkers. Since 1946 Mrs. Kato has been an elected representative of the Japanese Upper House and a vigorous supporter of the new family planning movement; she was a Vice-President of the I.P.P.F. from 1953 to 1959 and took a leading part in the organization of the Fifth International Conference on Planned Parenthood at Tokyo in 1955.

In China Mrs. Sanger quickly gained the support of the medical profession: in 1930 a group of university professors, physicians and social workers formed the Peiping Committee on Maternal Health, a pioneer organization for the promotion of scientific contraception, and in 1935 the Chinese Medical Association passed a resolution "that the Chinese medical profession should officially recognize that contraception is a part of the activities of public health, especially in the field of maternity and child welfare."

#### **Demographic Conferences**

Following the Fifth International Malthusian Conference in London in 1922, Mrs. Sanger persuaded the American Birth Control League to invite the next, the Sixth, to New York in 1925. One result of the New York Conference was the promotion of the second in the series of international organizations, the International Fed-

eration of Birth Control Leagues, the active work of which was, in 1930, undertaken by the Birth Control International Information Centre in London.

The next big step was the convening in 1927 of the first World Population Conference: not another comparable conference was held until the United Nations World Population Conference met at Rome in 1954. Margaret Sanger brought together at Geneva leading demographers, scientists, sociologists and physicians to discuss the subject of world population in the hope that a policy would be formulated to put an end to its uncontrolled growth. That hope was not fulfilled. In the weeks immediately before the conference a number of associations opposed to birth control began to put pressure on the President, Sir Bernard Mallet; to save the conference from disruption the sponsoring committee took a last-minute decision to rule out of order all mention of birth control or malthusianism. That incident was referred to twenty-seven years later in the President's opening remarks at the United Nations World Population Conference (Rome, 1954). Again, the warning was given: there was to be no so-called propaganda; the object of the Rome Conference was not to discuss policies or to make recommendations but to seek information on population trends and relevant matters. But whereas in 1927 all mention of birth control was excluded from the proceedings of the Geneva Conference, at the Rome Conference in 1954 papers were accepted on such subjects as "The Present Situation of Family Planning among Farmers and Coal Mine Workers in Japan" by Dr. Yoshio Koya; "The Pattern of Birth Control in Puerto Rico" by Dr. Joseph M. Stycos, and two by Dr. Abraham Stone: "Biological Factors influencing Human Fertility" and "Present Day Family Planning Techniques."

The immediate outcome of the Geneva Conference was the formation of two scientific organizations, one of which—the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population—exists to-day and collaborated in the organization of the Rome Conference. The other, the International Medical Group for the Investigation of Contraception, has been replaced by national committees and by the I.P.P.F. Medical

Committee and its International Evaluation Sub-Committee.

### Dissemination of Information

During the years 1929 to 1934 five reports were issued by the International Medical Group and published in England under the auspices of the Birth Control Investigation Committee. Edited by Dr. C. P. Blacker, who was both Chairman of the International Group and Honorary Medical Secretary of the Birth Control Investigation Committee, these reports summarized statistical and medical information about contraception as it became available in different countries. Their publication was facilitated by grants-in-aid from the Eugenics Society. Later reports appeared in the *Journal of Contraception* edited by Dr. Abraham Stone and published in the United States. The Journal subsequently renamed *Human Fertility*, ceased publication with Volume 13 in 1948.

In connection with the General Election of 1929 several women's organizations formed a joint committee under Mrs. Eva Hubback for the purpose of questioning parliamentary candidates about their views on birth control and an information office was opened in Westminster by Mrs. How-Martyn. After the election this office became a permanent Birth Control Information Centre and in 1930, following the Seventh International Birth Control Conference at Zurich, it was renamed the Birth Control International Information Centre; Mrs. Sanger became its President and Mrs. How-Martyn the Honorary Director. In 1936 they were succeeded by Lord Horder and Dr. Maurice Newfield respectively.

At the Zurich Conference, physicians, clinicians and lay workers from twelve countries met to discuss the work and procedures of existing birth control clinics, contraceptive techniques and the need for research. Biological methods of conception control were here discussed for the first time and reports received on sterilization procedures; the psychological aspects of birth control were also considered.

The main recommendations of the Zurich Conference may be summarized as follows: that birth control must be regarded as an essential part of public health programmes and

of preventive medicine in all countries; that the spread of contraceptive knowledge is the best means of reducing the incidence of abortion; that instruction in contraceptive techniques should be introduced into all medical curricula; that facilities for therapeutic and eugenic sterilization should be available to persons for whom existing contraceptive methods are impracticable, and that no chemical contraceptive for which the formula is not available should be prescribed by doctors. Here was the blue-print of the future and its sponsors were the nucleus of the present-day International Planned Parenthood Federation: Mrs. Margaret Sanger, Founder and President Emeritus; Mrs. Elise Ottesen-Jensen, President; Dr. Abraham Stone, a Vice-President until his death in July 1959; Dr. C. P. Blacker, Administrative Chairman (1959-1960); Dr. Helena Wright, Chairman, Medical Committee; Governing Body members Dr. Anne-Marie Durand-Wever (1953-1960) and Professor Hans Harmsen, both of Germany.

#### Personalities and Progress

The year 1930 marked the turning point of the birth control movement in the west; in the east it was notable for the establishment of the first Government birth control clinics in the world, by the Mysore Government in India. In England the Ministry of Health issued in July 1930 its Memorandum 153 MCW informing public health authorities that contraceptive advice could be given in cases where further pregnancy would be detrimental to health; while in the United States the National Committee on Federal Legislation for Birth Control, organized in 1929 by Mrs. Sanger, was gaining support for a "Doctor's Bill" to modify the Federal Postal Law so as to allow contraceptive information and appliances to be sent through the mails by doctors, hospitals, dispensaries and druggists. Secretary of that committee was Mrs. Dorothy Brush who in 1937 accompanied Mrs. Sanger on a third world tour; at the Stockholm Conference (1946) Mrs. Brush was appointed secretary of an international liaison committee; later she became in turn editor of the I.P.P.F. bulletin *Around the World News of Population and Birth Control* (1952-57) and Honorary

Adviser for Field Work Services (1957-1961).

The six years 1930 to 1936 were for the Birth Control International Information Centre a period of much activity and influence. Official correspondents were appointed in twenty-five countries and personal visits were made to twenty-one countries either by the President, Mrs. Sanger, the Honorary Director, Mrs. How-Martyn or other members of the Centre, among them Janet Chance, Gerda Guy and Frida Laski. The London Centre attracted many visitors from abroad some of whom later held political power in their own countries; others became well known for their work in the scientific, medical and social welfare fields.

Recalling the events of this period Mrs. Laski writes "I well remember the time Jawaharlal Nehru came to one of our weekly lunches, and how sympathetic he was towards our work, and during the Round Table Conference of 1930 all the Indian wives of the delegates were invited to a meeting."\*

At that time the All India Women's Conference representative in London was Dhanvanthi Rama Rau whose husband, Benegal Rama Rau, was later knighted and served as High Commissioner for India in South Africa and Japan. In recognition of her many years of work for women's social and political movements Lady Rama Rau was given in 1959 the Indian award of "Padma Bhushan": President of the Family Planning Association of India and a member of the Indian Government Family Planning Board, Lady Rama Rau was Joint President (with Margaret Sanger) of the I.P.P.F. in 1952-53 and at present holds the office of Chairman of Council.

#### Asian Problems

In November 1933 a conference on Birth Control in Asia, organized by the Centre, was held in London. Its purpose was to study the population problems of India, China and Japan, to determine the obstacles to the practice of birth control in these countries and to discuss ways of overcoming them. The findings of the conference were summed up in the *British Medical Journal* (December 2nd, 1933) as follows:

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\* THE EUGENICS REVIEW, April 1954, 46, 16.

Even if birth control alone would not serve as a complete remedy for the economic problems of Asia, granted even that the difficulties in the way of its dissemination were created by the very miseries it aimed at relieving, it yet offered, all speakers were agreed, a contribution to the solution of these problems; and they differed only in their estimates of how important (in relation to other measures) this contribution might be.

Many years later as Prime Minister of India, Pandit Nehru, in a speech inaugurating the Sixth International Conference on Planned Parenthood (Delhi, 1959) said: "Some of us really have arrived at the stage of advocating family planning because . . . in our thinking of national planning it has become inevitable . . . as part of the larger movement for raising the standard of living." He continued, "we have found that we can never plan at all for the nation and our Five-Year Plans have no meaning if the population grows at this rate" (2 per cent per annum).

As a result of the Birth Control in Asia Conference the All India Women's Conference invited the Centre to send a representative to India to put the case for birth control before the delegates. In response to this invitation Mrs. How-Martyn went to India in 1934: her visit helped to prepare the way for the more extensive tour of 1935-36 when the A.I.W.C. invited Mrs. Sanger to be its guest speaker at Travancore.

The stated objectives of the 1935-36 tour were to arouse public interest in the establishment of birth control centres, to focus attention on the relation of population control to national welfare and international peace, and to encourage public health agencies and officials to include contraceptive instruction in all health programmes. The countries visited were India (where Mrs. Sanger met Mahatma Gandhi), Ceylon, Burma, Malaya, China, the Philippines,

Japan, Hawaii, Canada and the western coast of the United States.

Two further visits to India were made by Mrs. How-Martyn, in 1936-37 and 1937-38. In 1938 the work of the Birth Control International Information Centre was transferred to the National Birth Control Association for which purpose an international sub-committee was set up under the chairmanship of Mr. J. H. Guy. This committee decided to concentrate effort and funds on developing the work in India and appointed Mrs. Rena Datta, the Scottish wife of the Indian Principal of the Forman Christian College, Lucknow, as N.B.C.A. Organizer in India. After six years of valuable work there she returned to England in 1945.

#### A Tribute to the Pioneers

After the outbreak of war Mrs. How-Martyn went to Australia in 1940; she died there, in 1954, in her eightieth year. Mrs. Laski concludes: "There is little that would have given Edith How-Martyn more happiness during these last few months of ill health than the knowledge that the movement to which she had devoted her last years had blossomed out into the International Planned Parenthood Federation."

The devotion of the pioneers of the period from 1912 to 1945 is unexampled in the history of the I.P.P.F.; their influence incalculable. In addition to carrying out an exhausting programme of work they had also to organize fund-raising campaigns to finance it: one of the more successful was the Malthusian Ball held under the patronage of H.R.H. Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone, at the Dorchester Hotel, London, in 1933. Some, like Clinton and Janet Chance and Harry and Gerda Guy, gave not only the greater part of their time but a good deal of their money to the movement.

Part 2 will appear in a future issue of the REVIEW.—EDITOR.